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The American Church Missionary Society

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# THE MISSION IN CUBA.

ADVENT 1900

CHURCH MISSIONS HOUSE,  
281 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY.



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In another pamphlet we publish an autobiographical sketch of the Rev. Pedro Duarte, and in that may be read the story of the earlier Missionary work in Cuba. This brief narrative begins with the close of the late war and the occupation of the island by the American troops, when a resumption of Missionary work was made possible.

The Rev. Mr. Duarte, with his family, returned to Matanzas in December, 1898, and he at once resumed work in that city. His chapel had been a refuge for the reconcentrados, dead bodies had lain for days in his vestry, and the building was desolated. At comparatively small cost the chapel and parsonage were restored and reoccupied. Mr. Duarte immediately made the influence of his strong character and work felt, and soon acquired prominence and weight in the community. A school was inaugurated, and Señor Pedro R. Someillan and Señorita Mercedes Acosta were secured to assist the Missionary. At once this enterprise was successful, and in a short time the capacity of the building and the force was reached.

That influence has now grown to even remarkable proportions. At the formal occupation of Matanzas by Gen. Wilson, he (Mr. Duarte) was deputized to hoist the American flag, and, at the request of the citizens, delivered the address of welcome. A bit later, when his mother "fell on sleep," he was able to get permission to bury her in the cemetery, the first Protestant burial, we believe, ever had in a Cuban cemetery; and last Fall, when eighty of the Cuban soldier dead were reinterred in the cemetery, Mr. Duarte and the Rev. Mr. Moreno, our Missionary in Bolondron, headed a procession of twenty thousand Cubans and buried these soldiers with our Office for the Burial of the Dead. Lately he and Señor Someillan have been requested to become members of the City Council. From time to time Mr. Duarte has visited neighboring points, and always with success, developing opportunities wherever he has gone. Only lack of means has prevented their further occupation.

His chapel in Matanzas, while too small for his work, is an attractive house of worship, his parsonage a pleasant home, his school has some 180 children in it, and of the improvement seen in them too much can not be said. The visitor sees at once the unmistakable presence of inspiration, and of that inspiration which is from without and above. Christ shows in the faces, the manners, and the appearance of these children. The work in Matanzas has been a splendid Christian work.

Last Autumn, at Mr. Duarte's instance, an Orphanage was established in

Matanzas. A fair building was bought adapted to its new purpose, well equipped, and fifteen children were placed in it. This number has now been increased to fifty, who are being well cared for. We quote the following letter in testimony of this good work :

"I spent last Sunday (January 28th) in Matanzas. The Orphanage is the cleanest, most homelike, and the best equipped institution of its kind that I have seen in Cuba. The little white beds were particularly attractive to me. The fact that they are entirely made of iron makes them the best beds for Cuba that could possibly be found. I was delighted with them and with the table furniture. The children seemed more refined than in any Orphanage I had seen before, and are certainly better clothed and neater in appearance than it has been possible to accomplish with the great number of children and with the means at command in Cienfuegos. I do not see how so much has been accomplished in so short a time. It must be because the Church and the school have prepared the way for the Orphanage. It was a great satisfaction to me to see the work in Matanzas, and I cannot praise it too highly.

"Very sincerely yours,

(Signed)

"ANNIE M. REED."

In the later days of last year he must needs say "Adios" to his daughter, as in the earlier days he had said it to his mother, his "right hand," he said she was. God called her to Himself. She had been a faithful and devoted co-worker in her father's mission, and so it was that when the Orphanage was opened, by resolution of the Executive Committee, it was named, in commemoration of her, "Palmira Duarte," and her works follow her.

In that portion of Havana known as the Jesus del Monte, Señor José R. Peña, our lay-reader, managed to maintain his service through the entire war, the only Protestant service, we believe, had on the island during that period.

There was no break, therefore, in this service, and the Society immediately came to his assistance. His influence and his congregation have steadily grown, and there is good reason to believe that here we have the good beginning of a permanent Church structure. Señor Peña is now a candidate for Holy Orders.\*

The Rev. Dr. Neilson, in January, 1899, at the request of the Society, went to Havana, and during the earlier portions of that year reorganized, as perhaps no one else could have done, the congregation on the Prado, especially among the English-speaking people. In the next month the Rev. W. H. McGee was sent to assist him and to assume charge of this work upon Dr. Neilson's return to the United States. Mr. McGee, with much discretion and energy, pushed the work set in motion by Dr. Neilson, and soon won for himself a place in the esteem of everybody; the prominent Americans, both civilians and soldiers, came to his side, and his

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\* Ordained Deacon December 6, 1900, by the Bishop of Pennsylvania.



service soon numbered among its regular attendants, officers and privates and the better class of American civilians. "It was a beautiful sight," a lady writes, "to see six or seven officers in the American uniform kneeling at the chancel rail for the Holy Communion," and that was frequently the case, and is still. Mr. McGee labors under the disadvantage of having no reputable building for his chapel. Until the middle of December, 1899, we had been compelled to use an upper room over a café on the Prado, a noisy, disagreeable location. Then Mr. McGee was stricken with yellow fever, and, unfortunately, in a room on the same floor adjoining the chapel. We were, therefore, compelled to abandon its use, and after a while, through the kindness first of Gen. Brooke and then of Gen. Wood, we were given permission to move into an unused commissary warehouse, where we are still. It is an improvement on our old quarters, but it can never stand for a Church. Could we build an attractive Church, it is safe to say we should soon have a self-supporting congregation. Our building is a dreadful handicap. Social laws and ceremonials in Cuba are rigid. The gentleman and the lady will consider it beneath their dignity and incompatible with their refinement to attend such a Church. The poorer class are doubtful about it. It is the sign of something cheap. They do not know us, and they must and will judge us by our exponents, and because of these exponents we are rated by them with the Young Men's Christian Association, etc. When this is remedied through the generosity of our own people, we shall see Mr. McGee at the head of a strong center of religious influence, which will be felt throughout that portion of Cuba. Havana is spiritually, as well as politically, the key to the island.

In the Summer of 1899, Señor Arturo Escaroz was asked to take charge of a school projected in Havana, connected with the chapel. He consented, and vacating his position as a teacher of Latin in an Havana college, opened this new work. Thus far it has justified itself, and Señor Escaroz has accomplished all that could have been expected under existing circumstances. He has become a postulant, and it is hoped, before a great while, he may push himself to ordination, and so give us another native clergyman in Cuba.

In July last the Rev. Manuel F. Moreno was sent as a Missionary to Bolondron. He is a Cuban himself, and familiar with the work, having been engaged in it under the auspices of this Society before the war. He and his faithful wife at once made themselves busy. He found a few communicants there, and some people turning toward the Church, and a pitiful orphan asylum, desperately begun by a noble Cuban physician in an almost reckless hope to help the little suffering children. The Missionary soon won affection and esteem, and has since then been made a member of the Board of Education. His chapel was furnished in a simple—in a too simple—and cheap way. But his work succeeded, and to-day he stands in his community and among his people well. The fact that in January last

Bishop Whitaker confirmed forty-four persons in this station, the result of six months' work, tells something of his devotion and success. The Orphanage, for lack of support—the Society did not have the means at its disposal—has been discontinued, and the girls removed to Matanzas. But what Cuba needs, it should be known, is not food and clothes, nor yet so much education, but God's truth and Christian inspiration. Movements directed to other ends are likely to prove to be waste of energy and generous means until Christian forces are well in operation.

Bishop Whitaker, accompanied by Mrs. Whitaker, sailed, in January, for Cuba, to make his Episcopal visitations. The report of this visit has been made by him to the presiding Bishop, and is gratifying; he confirmed 118 persons. With him went the Rev. Andrew T. Sharpe, to occupy as a Missionary such field as the Bishop should presently determine. Mr. Sharpe for some weeks took charge of the work in Havana, that Mr. McGee might have opportunity to recover with greater ease from his very severe attack of yellow fever, which had left him much enfeebled. Later, upon Mr. McGee's resumption of his work, Mr. Sharpe went to Matanzas, where he discovered a large and important English-speaking colony and congregation, and with them he remained and worked for some months; he has now returned to Havana, but on January 1st will open our Mission in Santiago. Mr. Sharpe speaks Spanish, and has before him a bright future in Cuba.

This constitutes what may be called the organized work in Cuba. In Guantanamo a lady of this communion has been actively engaged in work among the poor children, with a school and a day nursery and something of an orphanage, at her own charges and through the response to her personal appeals to friends. She urges the Church to take up her work, and make it specifically a Church work, but thus far we have been unable to secure her help, and that opportunity may fade away. God forefend. Just such another story is told of a lady in Sagua la Grande, and just such failure to meet the issue. God stir up the hearts of His faithful people to do their duty in these places crying for Christ's help. In El Roque we are coaxingly invited to come, in Cienfuegos there is fair opportunity, in Remedios they petition us to come and work. But everywhere in Cuba we have had opportunity, invitation and welcome.

Can the people of this Church in the homeland be aroused to such generosity and interest as will compare with the energy and character of those in the field, we shall win much of Cuba to the Lord Jesus Christ.

During this year—1900-1901—we should have at least \$12,000, to maintain our work, and at least \$60,000 for the erection of a Church in Havana, and Chapels elsewhere.\* With these funds in hand our Cuban work will be assured, and never was opportunity greater.

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\* A Chapel in Bolondron is now building.



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